TASK FORCE RUSSIA -- TRIWEEKLY REPORT -- 10-30 JULY 1993

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON D. C. 20301-2400

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM FOR AMBASSADOR MALCOLM TOON AND COMMISSION MEMBERS

SUBJECT: Triweekly Report, 10-30 July 1993

Events covering this reporting period reflect efforts well under way to define agenda topics for the 25 August - 4 September plenary sessions in Moscow.

Numerous leads not fully explored from past meetings are described in the series of written exchanges between Task Force Russia representatives in Moscow and their counterparts. Information obtained through an aggressive interview program with sources outside the Russian Federation has been integrated into materials furnished to Russian colleagues in the hope that a coherent picture will emerge.

We ascribe much importance to the forthcoming plenary as the key mechanism for assuring that commission researchers are given the level of access to archival sources that is essential to their investigative efforts.

Planning for the forthcoming sessions in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Yerevan continues, with a preparatory meeting on August 11 at the Executive Secretariat's offices and a session of the U.S. commissioners on August 13. At both sessions, we expect to present a proposed list of agenda items based on Ambassador Toon's letter to General Volkogonov, as well as an update of our latest logistical "challenges".

Norman D. Kass

/signed/

Acting Executive Secretary U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs

HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

This report has been prepared for the use of the Commission in pursuit of our mission. While it is an unclassified document in accordance with Department of Defense classification guidelines for POW/MIA information, it nonetheless contains casualty-related information and should not be disseminated outside of Commission channels pending efforts by the Department of Defense Executive Agent to locate and notify as many of the next of kin as feasible.

TRIWEEKLY REPORT OF SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES

JOINT COMMISSION SUPPORT BRANCH (JCSB) TASK FORCE RUSSIA (POW/MIA) (TFR)

Period of Report: 10 July--30 July 1993

1. SUMMARY:

A. On Saturday, 17 July, JCSB representatives briefed the National Alliance of Families at their annual meeting in Washington. Highlights were the presentation of the reconstructed scenario of the 29 July 1953 shootdown off Vladivostok and the playing of the JCSB-produced video "Korean War POW Transfers to the Soviet Union: Eyewitnesses." JSCB representatives also attended the annual meeting of

the National League of Families, also held in the Washington area.

B. TFR visited the St. Petersburg regional MVD prison hospital to examine its files for possible American names. Following a warm reception and initial access to the files, the hospital director received a phone call instructing him to terminate TFR's direct access to the files. The director promised that his staff would conduct a files review.

C. TFR deployed a team to Ukraine and the Crimea to investigate leads, and continued to press the Russian side of the Joint Commission for information that had long been promised. TFR-M received a communication from Mr. I. G. Fedorenko of the Kuban Cossack Forces, an ethnicity-based para-military organization, listing several Anglo-American names of Communist victims allegedly interred locally. Two of the names were of U.S. service personnel from Vietnam, according to Fedorenko, but a files review by JCSB analysts found no correlation to Americans missing from Indochina.

D. TFR contacted MG Yuri Kirshin, (Retd.),, author of a book on Soviet participation in the Korean War. Although initially adamant in his refusal to have any dealings with TFR, Kirshin, following intercession by a third party, promised to share some information he has reportedly unearthed regarding the names of U.S. service members that appeared in the Soviet archives.

E. Both TFR and JCSB dedicated substantial assets to preparations for the impending meeting of the Joint Commission in Moscow at the end of August. TFR-M worked with the Russian side on scheduling and agenda matters, clearly identifying those issues of the highest priority to the U.S. side. JCSB prepared a summary of information gaps to which the Russian side has thus far failed to respond. JCSB also prepared to send subject matter experts and translators to Moscow to support the Commission during the plenary session.

F. A JSCB analyst engaged in research on Chinese involvement with U.S. POW/MIAs during the Korean and Cold War periods discovered evidence that the Chinese recovered the dog tags of Major George A. Davis, who was shot down on 10 February 1952. A Chinese publication indicated that Major Davis died when his aircraft was shot down by a Chinese pilot. Working through appropriate channels, JCSB will pursue the question of whether the Chinese hold the remains or additional personal effects of Major Davis. Also, the same analyst found indications that the Chinese may have further information on the fate of the crew of a B-29 shot down on 10 June 1952 over Gwagsan.

UPDATE ON ISSUES FROM PREVIOUS REPORTS:

A. TFR supplied the Russian side with a list of non-Russian contacts (former Soviet citizens) who claim to have encountered American service members in the GULag. TFR requested a formal Russian response. LTC Osipov, Colonel-general Volkogonov's military assistant, delivered a series of letters asserting that there is no further information on the sources in the Russian archives. (OSD note: Clearly, further review of Russian archival holdings is required before our investigation of leads provided by non-Russian contacts can be concluded.)

(MSG CITE: "Osipov letters" dated 22 July 1993 and 27 July 1993)

B. The Russian side cleared for security and returned a video tape of the Joint Far East trip shot by U.S. participants. The cassette has been forwarded to Washington. Documents requested from the local museum on Iturup have not yet reached Moscow, due to reproduction difficulties.

(MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 211403Z JUL 93)

C. Amembassy Vilnius representatives paid a follow-up visit to the massacre memorial site at Paneriai Forest in Lithuania, where massacre survivor Josephas Medaiskis alleges he witnessed the execution of 18-20 U.S. airmen. Acting as a voluntary guide, Mr. Medaiskis (who was in Georgia during TFR's recent Baltic deployment) first took the embassy personnel to the old local train station site, where he says the uniformed Americans arrived along with 50-60 Jews in five train cars. Medaiskis remembers that some of

the Jews spoke French and were apparently from France or Belgium. The U.S. service members had been sequestered in a single car, but, upon detraining, were able to mix with Jewish prisoners being held in the general area, some of whom spoke English. The U.S. service members stated that German soldiers had refused orders to shoot them and that they believed they had been brought to the Vilnius area to work in a labor camp. When ghetto residents told the Americans that everyone was being shot, one of the alleged airmen countered that the Americans had been brought to work and that the noise from a nearby factory proved it. The noise, however, was from an unmuffled generator the Germans used to mask the sound of the mass shootings in the nearby pits. Medaiskis, as in his previous contact, recalled two black men among the airmen. He recalls that they were not wearing hats and that he kept staring at their hair, since he had never seen blacks before. Medaiskis described some of the other men as wearing headgear resembling U.S. garrison caps. Medaiskis recalls that one of the blacks had U.S. Army written on the left side of his shirt, but he was not fully clear when describing other insignia. Medaiskis recalls that a German officer signed a paper--a probable receipt for the Jews and airmen. The German paid little attention to the document, since everyone was simply being shot. Medaiskis repeated his story of how he stood behind the airmen and fell down when the round of shooting started. Later, he was able to extricate himself from the pit where he had lain under the U.S. bodies. Medaiskis feels that he survived thanks to the presence of the Americans and asks that the U.S. Government provide a memorial plaque in their honor.

(1) Amembassy Vilnius is forwarding a request to the Director of the Lithuanian State Archives to search for any Nazi/SS/POW-related documents that may be extant.

(2) Medaiskis also produced personal memorabilia, including photos and forged documents used to escape the Nazis, his yellow Star of David, and an official testament to his status as a survivor of the Vilnius ghetto.

(MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 210607Z JUL 93)

3. EVENTS, INTERVIEWS, CONTACTS, AND MEETINGS ATTENDED:

A. On Saturday, 17 July, representatives of JCSB gave two presentations to the National Alliance of Families at their annual meeting. One officer briefed the organization's progress on the 29 July 1953 shootdown, using graphics to illustrate the former U.S. and Soviet official positions and the synthesized variant that JCSB believes most closely corresponds with reality. The briefing included recently-uncovered evidence that appears to confirm the belief that Soviet vessels arrived on the scene within hours of the shootdown. Following this briefing, JCSB played the videotape on the Korean War POW transfer issue that was presented to the Russian side of the Joint Commission in April. The briefer underscored the fact that the tape contains one honest error--the inclusion of the sequence in which the Lithuanian parliamentarian describes meeting an American in the GULAG (this incident involved an American seized in 1945 on the Korean peninsula, not during the later Korean War). JCSB pointed out that the error had not been edited out, since it was important for the families to see exactly what was presented to the Russian side on their behalf; further, the videotape must be considered a historical document. The audience responded very positively to both presentations, and it appeared that TFR/JCSB had taken a further important step toward rebuilding trust between POW/MIA family members and their government.

B. TFR representatives deployed to Koktebel, Ukraine, and Kalininskaya, Krasnodar Kray (southern) Russia, as well as to the Crimea, as part of the ongoing field interview program.

(1) In Koktebel, Ryurik Mikhailovich Baranov claimed to have met three American prisoners from World War II (WWII) in the GULAG. Baranov was an inmate of the KarLag, near Karaganda, Kazakhstan, from 1945 to 1953, and claimed that the Americans were held on trumped-up criminal charges, which they consistently and vocally protested. Baranov remembered "Sirus Smit" (Cyrus Smith?) best. He met Smit(h) in 1947 and spent six months with him, at the end of which the American was transferred to Platina, a notoriously harsh camp, because of a conflict with the "group leader." Baranov never heard from or of Smit(h) again. Baranov said he recalled that the second man was named "Gary" and that he

was some sort of special operations soldier. Gary was short, with a wide body build, slightly slanted eyes and black hair. Gary claimed to come from Massachusetts and he loved to talk about hunting turkeys. Baranov thought that Gary had been an enlisted man and had been affiliated somehow with the convoys of lend-lease mat,riel from Liverpool, England. Gary's mother had the same name as Baranov's mother--Magda. Gary had a bad cough and a scar on the left side of his rib cage. Regarding the third man, Baranov remembered only that he was shorter than Smit(h). the Americans were never called by their names by the camp authorities but had to answer to their camp numbers. All three of the Americans had been transferred out of the KarLag by 1948. Baranov believes that the Americans likely died in captivity, even though they were "healthy and strong," and were "morally and spiritually strong."

(2) In Krasnodar Kray, TFR interviewed Vladimir Grigoryevich Zhabsky, who claimed a long-standing interest in plane crash sites. In 1969, he went with some school children to investigate the site of a reported 1943 plane crash, and he continued to explore the crash site through 1976. At the request of TFR-M, Zhabsky made six actual-size drawings of objects he found at the crash site. These drawings, complete with lettering identifying the plane as of U.S. origin, have been forwarded to JCSE, but have not been received as of this writing. Zhabsky stated that he turned the actual hardware over to a local KGB representative, (then) LTC Linkandry Ivanovich Charchenko, in June, 1976. TFR visited the crash site with Zhabsky, but no visible evidence remained. (TFR note: This site may be the same one referred to by Vladimir Dmitriyevich D'yachenko of Moscow, who said he observed the crash of an American plane in Krasnodar Kray in 1944 or 1945.) (JCSB note: Given the location of the crash site, at least two possibilities arise: first, the aircraft could have been U.S. crewed and flying the Teheran to the USSR run or, second, it could have been a lend-lease aircraft flown by a Russian crew.)

(MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 291326Z JUL 93)

C. TFR visited the St. Petersburg Regional Prison (MVD) Hospital to inspect the facility's historical patient card files. The hospital commander, Colonel Viktor Leonidovich Sazhin, received TFR cordially and introduced Tatiana Viktorovna Pokudova, Chief of the Hospital Records Department. Sazhin claimed that the hospital had never had a special "foreigners' division," and, to his recollection, only one American had ever been treated there--Karl Ort Linnas, a Lithuanina-born defector who died in 1987 or 1988. Ms. Pokudova then led the TFR representatives upstairs to the Records Department, where she cleared a table for their use and showed them two banks of card catalog drawers. One bank had 45 drawers, the other 63, and Pokudova identified 29 drawers she believed were most likely to prove of interest. Each drawer examined by TFR-M contained approximately 1200 cards, inserted alphabetically by last name and cross-referenced to aliases. TFR members immediately set to work reviewing the files card by card. The oldest card viewed dated from September, 1936, and the latest from June, 1979. It took about one hour and ten minutes to get through four-fifths of a drawer; TFR estimates that it would take two people over 23 hours to go through all of the cards. Approximately an hour and a half into the research, Colonel Sazhin appeared. At first, he suggested that it would be more effective if his staff conducted the review. When a TFR member stated that he and his colleague had come to St. Petersburg for exactly this work, Sazhin became flustered and stated that the fact of the matter was that he had just received a phone call from his (unnamed) superiors informing him that TFR was not allowed to examine the card files. (TFR note: Sazhin personally appeared genuinely embarrassed by the situation. His desire to cooperate seemed authentic). Sazhin then invited TFR back to his office for refreshments, calling in two doctors who had been on the staff for an extended period. The doctors, Arnold Ilych Greenblad and German Borisovich Manannikov, both denied that any Americans had ever been treated at the hospital--even before the question had been posed. When Sazhin reminded them about Linnas, they agreed that that had been the only case. Sazhin later promised that his staff would search the files for U.S.-sounding names. In the course of the files search, TFR found only one remotely U.S.-sounding name, "Albert Elmarovich (son of Elmer? "Avloy," who, according to the file card, was born in Estonia in 1934 and was arrested on 24 May 1955 for "hooliganism."

(MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 231414Z JUL 93)

D. Through the good offices of Mr. Malcolm McConnell and MG John Singlaub (USA, Ret.), TFR was able to contact Russian MG Yuri Kirshin (Ret.), who has written a book on Soviet involvement in the

Korean War which he expects to have published in the United States. When initially approached by TFR, Kirshin stated emphatically that he wanted nothing to do with the Joint Commission in its present configuration, due to a personal conflict with a leading Russian figure. He said that his book contained no mention of U.S. POWs and he categorically refused to meet with any U.S. members of the Joint Commission. Following the intercession of MG Singlaub, Kirshin agreed to provide the names of U.S. service members that emerged as part of his research. Kirshin says that until the old Soviet documents enter the public domain so that real historians can review them, "the whole truth will remain unknown." (JCSB note: An outline of Kirshin's text provided by MG Singlaub includes one direct reference to U.S. POWs: "American pilots taken prisoner provide the Soviet command with government and military secrets," and also includes extensive references to the 64th Independent Air Corps--the Soviet composite unit directly involved in the air-to-air and ground-to-air struggle with the U.S. Air Force, as well as with intelligence exploitation of information gleaned from U.S. pilots and aircrews.)

(MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 291327Z JUL 93)

E. A JCSB analyst/Chinese linguist Foreign Area Officer has been conducting extensive research in open-source texts and documents from Beijing pertinent to the Korean War. In addition to deepening JCSB's understanding of the interrelationships between the North Koreans, Soviets and Chinese, this endeavor has begun to yield concrete results:

(1) A Beijing publication, *Chinese Military Power Almanac, 1949-1989,* dated 1990, states that Chinese Korean War Volunteers Battle Records report that "American ace" Major George A. Davis was shot down by Zhang Jihui on 10 February 1952. Another text, *Korean War Logistic Work Experience Summary: Pictorial,* which was endorsed by former Chinese President Yang Shangkun, contains a picture of Major Davis and a close-up of his dog tag. The caption states that Major Davis was dead. U.S. records show that Major -Davis was reported MIA on 10 February 1952. His F-86 had taken off from Kimpo Air Base, South Korea, for a combat mission over North Korean territory. Major Davis engaged and severely damaged two MIGs, after which a third MIG shot up his aircraft. The F-86 went into a steep dive and, for a brief period, the aircraft could not be seen by Davis's wingman. the wingman then spotted Davis's plane again. Davis had pulled out of the dive and was headed southeast toward Sonch'on. seconds later, the F-86 went into a series of lazy dives, climbs and spirals, then crashed into the side of a hill approximately 12 miles from Sonch'on. Although the canopy appeared to have jettisoned, the wingman and a subsequent aerial search were unable to find any trace of Major Davis. A news release in a communist newspaper, Ta Kung Pao (Hong Kong), dated 21 May 1952, alleged that Major Davis had been killed when his plane was shot down over North Korea. (JCSB note: Major Davis's name is on the list of Armed Forces members who lost their lives in the Korean War and whose remains were not recovered. Major Davis's MIA status was terminated after an Air Force mandatory review on 28 February 1954 determined that sufficient evidence existed to presume that he was killed in action. While the information recently gleaned from Chinese sources gives no indication that Major Davis survived his shootdown, Chinese possession of Davis's dogtag raises the possibility that the Chinese may hold other personal effects or even Major Davis's remains.)

(2) Other Chinese sources suggest the possibility of uncovering more facts related to the loss of the 14-man B-29 crew headed by 1LT Wilbur Eugene Lewis during a night bombing raid on Gwagsan on 10 June 1952. U.S. records show that two B-29s were lost that night. One B-29 was fully destroyed and its crew members were declared KIA/BNR. The second B-29 was reported missing, status unknown. A Beijing publication from December 1990, *The War to Resist U. S. Aggression and Support Korea,* refers to the destruction of three B-29s during a night raid on the Gwagsan railroad bridges on 10 June 1952. (JCSE note: Although the information in the Chinese text is sketchy, it raises the possibility that Chinese military archives may hold more specific information as to the fate of 1LT Lewis and the thirteen other crew members aboard his B-29. This information has been forwarded through OSD to the Department of State as the basis of a potential query to the Beijing Government.)

(MSG CITE: Memoranda of LTC Cheng Yu Huang, USA)

F. Amembassy Moscow received a note from LTC-equivalent I.G. Fedorenko, Chief of the Department of

Investigation of the Kuban Cossack Forces, one of the military-oriented ethno-historical organizations that have sprouted up around the former USSR and whose activities range from wearing czarist military costumes and haranguing crowds in the streets to supplying armed fighters to the violent conflicts on Russia's periphery. Of all these organizations, the Kuban Cossack Forces have, perhaps, the most impressive letterhead. The note asked if any information were available on five individuals suspected of English or American ties who died on the territory of Krasnodar Kray between 1920 and 1975. Two of the five were, according to the note, American officer POWs from Vietnam. The names given were Lt. William R. Atchison and Captain John F. Jameson (transliteration appeared clear). Neither of these names correspond to U.S. service members unaccounted for from Indochina; however, JCSB analysts will continue to cross-check files and TFR will further investigate the issues raised by the Kuban Cossack Forces.

(MSG CITE: LETTER OF I.G. FEDORENKO, KUBANSKOE KAZACH'E VOISKO, dated 16 JUNE 1993)

G. TFR notes that the interview process in Russia and the former USSR, as well as official coordination with Russian counterparts, is presently impeded by the Russian and former USSR vacation schedules, which tend to empty offices in July and, especially, August.

H. JCSB members have deployed to conduct several field interviews in support of the impending meeting of the Joint Commission. Details will be reported in subsequent triweekly reports.

4. Recommendations:

A. During the anticipated stopover in St. Petersburg as an immediate prelude to the Joint Commission meeting, the commissioners should consider enlisting the support of Mayor Anatoly Sobchak, a charismatic and influential political leader who may be able to obtain cooperation from the local security service representatives in support of the Commission's work.

B. JCSB and TFR should continue to supply the Russian side with specific queries as to the status of issues raised by the U.S. side at previous plenary sessions of the Commission.

C. The JCSB chain-of-command should consider leaving a two-man team of analysts in Yerevan for approximately one week following the Commission's visit to Armenia for the purpose of further developing or investigating leads on the Yerevan shootdown and building potentially-valuable ties to Armenian officials.